



20 June 2006

Fourth of July Holiday Safety

1. What a great time to be in Europe! School is out and summer is in full swing. As we celebrate our country's independence on the Fourth of July and honor those who defend our freedom, let us make the most of this opportunity to take a well-deserved break and enjoy the warm weather.
2. Whether you will be traveling, enjoying water sports, or taking part in other activities over the long holiday weekend, I ask that you do whatever it takes to ensure your safety and that of your loved ones. Plan your activities, make a composite risk assessment of your plans, discuss your plans with your leaders, and take steps to minimize the risks. Make a commitment to watch out for and take care of one another.
3. In addition to encouraging you to plan your holiday weekend carefully, I ask you to keep the following in mind:
 - The World Cup Soccer tournament is underway and games have been scheduled in Frankfurt and Gelsenkirchen (1 July), Dortmund (4 July), and Munich (5 July). Many cities in Germany will host huge parties during the tournament, especially if the German team is playing. Other countries taking part in the games may have similar festivities. If you plan to take part, be sure to consider your safety and security and that of your family members and buddies. This is not the time to let down our guard. Watch out for trouble between fans of opposing teams, do not allow yourself to become a victim of a crime, and be aware of the dangers associated with consuming too much alcohol.
 - If you go swimming over the holiday, make sure the swimming area you use is authorized. Each garrison has a list of authorized swimming areas to ensure the health and safety of swimmers. Stay away from off-limit swimming areas, including rivers. Rivers are silent killers, and many have dangerous currents and submerged debris. Also be sure to swim with someone else. If you swim alone, you greatly decrease the possibility of getting help if you should need it. Do not let your holiday turn into a tragedy. Two of our Soldiers have drowned in rivers, one last year and one the year before. Let us reverse that trend this year.
 - Alcohol mixed with any activity increases the chances of tragedy. Alcohol reduces the ability to think clearly and react appropriately. This in turn increases the probability of serious injury while operating machinery, including vehicles and bicycles, and participating in sports.


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- Summer is the prime season for motorcycle riding. If you plan to ride over the long weekend, carefully consider the risks. So far this fiscal year, 34 Soldiers have died across the Army as a result of motorcycle accidents. Riding responsibly and according to your skill level will prevent this death toll from climbing.

4. As we celebrate over this Fourth of July weekend, let us remember that our goal continues to be *No Loss of Life*. We can reach this goal by “owning the edge” and taking care of one another. Have a great holiday!



DAVID D. McKIERNAN
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Commanding



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